India in the form of a Non-Plan grant and the balance 25% by the concerned State Government.

The Tenth Finance Commission (TFC) recommended continuance of the scheme of CRF with a corpus of Rs. 6304.27 crore for the period 1995-96 to 1999-2000, to be contributed by the Central and the State Governments in the ratio of 3:1. The Central share is released in four equal quarterly instalments.

Total allocation of Rs. 1328.15 crore has been made to all the States under CRF for 1998-99, which includes Central share of Rs. 996.11 crore and State share of Rs. 332.04 crore.

In addition to CRF, on the recommendation of the TFC, a National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR) was created with a corpus of Rs. 700 crore for the period 1995—2000 to deal with calamities of rare severity, to be contributed by Central and State Governments in the ratio of 3:1.

Demands of Postal Staff

*78. SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the current situation regarding the solution to the demands made by the Postal staff during the recent agitation;

(b) whether the Department of Posts has agreed to offset the agitation period in such a way that Postal Staff do not suffer any loss of pay; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) The 10-Point Charter of Demands submitted by the two Federations of Postal Employees in connection with the Postal strike during 8-9 July-16 July, 1998, comprised the following:—

(a) Implementation of all positive recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee on ED Agents and rejection of all adverse recommendations,

(b) Improvement in the Pay Scales of Postman grade,

(c) Implementation of revised bonus formula and grant of additional number of days bonus for the year 1996-97,

(d) The remaining demands related to upgradation of scales of Pay for different categoreis of employees in the Department of Posts like Group 'D', Postal Assistant, Accountant, Drivers and Workshop Staff, Stenographer and JAOs, and regularisation of Part Time/Casual Labours and grant of benefits on par with regular employees.

Issues regarding improvement of Pay Scales of Postman cadre and implementation of revised bonus formula along with additional number of days for bonus in respect of year 1996-97 were decided with the approval of the Cabinet and necessary orders in this regard have been issued. Implementation of recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee on ED Agents is under active considration of the Government.

In respect of the other demands regarding improvement of Pay Scales for different categories of staff in the Department, a Committee Chaired by Member (Personnel), Postal Services Board, has been set up with officials of the Department and representatives of the two Federations of Postal Employees. The Committees is entrusted with formulation of agreed views on the demands so that further appropriate action can be initiated for obtaining necessary orders of the Government. The Committee has held several meetings and its report is expected to be finalised shortly.

As regards the period of absence (of regular Government employees) due to the Postal strike during 8-9th July-16th July, 1998, orders have been issued for

regularising the period of absence of regular government employees by grant of leave as due and admissible. In respect of ED agents, mode of determing the period of absence due to the Postal strike willl be decided after Government's decision on the implementation of the recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee.

TV Coverage in Gujarat

*79. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have undertaken the work for expansion of TV coverage in Gujarat, particularly, in those areas which do not receive TV telecast;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether different projects are underway for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI MUKHTAR NAQVI): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Besides augmentation of power at High Power Transmitter (HPT), Bhuj, HPTs at Vadodra and Surat, Low Power Transmitters (LPTs), at Rajula, Khambhalia, Umargaon, Modasa, Lunawada, Jamjodhpur, Rajpipla and Vyara are, at present, under various stages of implementation.

India's relations with South Africa

*80. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "PMO mishandling relations with South Africa" which appeared in The Hindustan Times, dated the 3rd November, 1998;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether it is a fact that there is no policy planning forum in his Ministry; if so, the reasons for keeping the forum defunct for such a long time ignoring all diplomatic norms; and

(d) what results have been achieved after the Prime Minister's visit to South Africa, recently, particularly in strengthening diplomatic relations with their country strongly opposed to nuclear tests of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There has been no mishandling of relations with South Africa.

(c) There is a fully functional, Policy Planning Division in the Ministry of External Affairs and steps are being taken to further strengthen it.

(d) The visit to South Africa was in the context of XII Non-Aligned Summit at Durban on September 2-3, 1998. The visit offered an opportunity to interact with the leadership of South Africa and to explain to them the retionale of India's nuclear tests. Nuclear disarmament continues to be an important element in India's foreign policy and this issue has been discussed with the South African side. Following the Prime Ministerial visit, there have been important visits at significant levels between the two countries covering a wide segment of our bilateral relations. Several high level visits are also due to take place in the near future, which will further strengthen bilateral relations. The Indo-South Africa Joint Commission is scheduled to meet in South Africa on December 4-5, 1998.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

आलू और प्याज के उत्पादन में गिरावट

466. श्री बलवंत सिंह रामूवालिया:
श्री कपिल सिब्बल:

क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि गत कुछ वर्षों से देश में आलू और प्याज का उत्पादन निरंतर कम होता जा रहा है;